found in the forest of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh where it is found in small quantities in the forests. Kuth in wild is endangered and hence it is placed in Appendix I of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and schedule VI of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Kuth of cultivated origin is placed in Appendix II of CITES, thereby making its export much easier. However, keeping the endangered status of Wild Kuth in view, there is no proposal under consideration in this Ministry to declare Kuth as an agricultural produce.

U. S. stand on Kashmir

*95. SHRI SUKOMAL SEN:
SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent statement of Ms. Robin Raphel, a senior American official questioning the vilidity of the Kashmir accession to India;

(b) if so, whether it is a deliberate move to pressurise India on various issues of critical concern to India which US has been raking of late; and

(c) if so, what is the reaction of Government thereto and how does the shift in US policy towards India affect Indo-US relations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) At a background briefing to South Asian journalists on October 28, 1993 at the Foreign Press Centre in Washington, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Robin Raphel called into question the status of Kashmir. She stated that the US Government did not recognise the Instrument of Accession and regarded the whole of Jammu and Kashmir as disputed territory the status of which remains to be resolved. She questioned the effectiveness of the Simla Agreement in resolving the Kashmir dispute and downplayed Pakistan's role in supporting terrorism in India.

(b) Government have noted that under the Clinton Administration, the United States foreign policy agenda is dominated by issues relating to non-proliferation, trade, human rights and regional conflicts and there has been a consequent sharpening of differences in perceptions and positions on some of these issues. USG's policy towards the Kashmir issue has been seen to have evolved gradually since 1947 to the most recent reiteration that "for more than four decades the consistent US position has been that the former princely, state of Jammu and Kashmir is disputed territory" and that "the US view is that negotiations between Governments of India and Pakistan, as envisaged by Simla Agreement, provide best means for resolving dispute over Kashmir. As a practical matter, US believes this process of bilateral negotiation needs to take into account wishes of Kashmiri people." Government constantly monitor all developments having a bearing on India's vital interests. Negative assertions regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir only strengthen Government's resolve to defend India's territorial unity and integrity.

(c) It would be unrealistic to expect total harmony in relations between the world's two largest democracies. Notwithstanding the differences, Indo-relations have witnessed systematic improvement in interaction in the economic and commercial spheres with the US remaining by far our largest trading partner, the biggest source for foreign direct investment and an important source of high technology. Government are committed to a policy which seeks to address the negative agenda of our relations with the US through a process of constructive dialogue, builds in the positive aspects of interaction in the economic and commercial spheres but remains vigilant against any threat to India's basic national interests. Government are pursuing a policy of considered and constructive dialogue with the US keeping India's national interest as the sole determinant factor.